868 are transgressed.

868 857 Learning of adult skills is often accomplished through imitative play. A little girl of three and a half was passed a straw plate and, separately, some paper clips. She immediately put the paper clips on the plate as her mother would do in the preparation of food, and began her own approximation of the quick, deft, jiggling movement of sifting the shells of groundnuts. None of the paper-clips was dropped from the plate and she soon passed the plate back saying, "Here are some groundnuts."

857 867 Sometimes imitative play is more organised. A large group of children between the age of six to ten may organise a "wedding". One of the young boys is the groom and a bride is chosen, as are in-laws, best man, lead woman, etc. Every detail of the adult virgin [864] marriage ceremony is carried out, even to a mock impregnation, in this case a small doll. The wedding foods, in miniature, are passed around to the proper people, who accept the mock food with a show of seriousness. Adults thought this play was instructive and remarked that it was a good way for the children to learn the customs of the people.

794 793 Childhood is also the time of basic religious instruction which is more highly stressed for boys. Young boys may be given away any time after the age of six or seven to a Koranic mallam for a year or two, to live and travel with him, work for him, and live in abject poverty, in order to learn Arabic prayers, and some Arabic script. Their relationship to him while under his tutelage is expressed in the Kanuri saying "mallamum abanum kosina" (your mallam exceeds your father). In other words, an individual's Koranic teacher exceeds his father in fatherly qualities, which means he must be given respect, obeyed and sub-

794 793 mitted to as a superior whose authority is unquestioned. In other cases, mallams near at hand or in the compound take up the job and the [871] child is not forced to leave home. Today there is the added possibility of receiving religious instruction in the government schools. However, this is still rare in rural areas.

591 By the age of ten or twelve years, a young Kanuri boy may have lived in quite a number of households. One informant related how he was adopted by his grandfather at weaning, given to a wandering mallam at the age of six, entered Junior Primary School as a boarder at nine, and entered the service of a District Head at the age of thirteen. This is not an extreme case, especially when the high rate of divorce is considered. Thus a young boy or girl, especially the former, can find himself in one to five or more different households or primary 591 group settings by the time he has reached early adolescence. It may 571 be proper here to ask who is the authority figure in the young child's life; who is it that in his person embodies or symbolizes authority? And the answer is of fundamental importance — no one. The Kanuri child learns, whether he lives in one compound or many, that his society is a system of ranked hierarchies in which there are many people to whom he must give respect and subordination.

Puberty

561 By the end of childhood, as the Kanuri define it (which means somewhere between the ages of nine to thirteen), the sex roles and many of their accompanying behaviours have been established. From this period onward the development towards adult status is sharply dif- 881 ferentiated for males and females. Somewhere around puberty a young 582 girl is given in virgin marriage by her father or the person who has been designated as having the power of marriage dispensation over her. Male